RESOLUTION NO.

WHEREAS, the City is committed to a victim-centered, trauma-informed approach to public safety; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that victims and witnesses of violent crime feel safe reporting and calling for help in the event of an emergency; and

WHEREAS, many vulnerable residents are hesitant to call for emergency response when they need help due to fear that they could be arrested on unrelated matters, such as warrants for unpaid tickets, public intoxication, offenses related to poverty and housing status, and other low-level infractions, as well as discretionary civil immigration enforcement requests; and

WHEREAS, it is well documented that "a victim's willingness to participate in the investigative process, trust in the criminal justice system, and motivation to proceed are affected by the initial treatment they receive from law enforcement, responders, and investigative personnel;"[1] and

WHEREAS, community partners have reported multiple instances of domestic violence and sexual assault victims calling to report serious, violent offenses and then being detained or told they would be arrested on misdemeanor or non-criminal warrants when law enforcement arrived on the scene; and

WHEREAS, as of March 2026, there are currently over 60,000 warrants for unpaid Class C tickets out of the Austin Municipal Court and Community Court system and thousands of arrests on Class C tickets each year in Austin; and

WHEREAS, domestic violence shelters report that many survivors fleeing

[1] U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services, *Victim-Centered, Trauma-Informed Practices: An Overview*, p. 6 (citing Maddox, Lucy, Deborah Lee, and Chris Barker. 2011). "Police Empathy and Victim PTSD as Potential Factors in Rape Case Attrition." Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology 26(2): 112–117. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-010-9075-6.

violence struggle to obtain paperwork, identification, and benefits due to low-level warrants; and

WHEREAS, warrants and arrests for Class C tickets disproportionately impact Black and Latino communities to an extreme degree, both nationally and in Austin;[2] and

WHEREAS, courts across the country have succeeded in decreasing outstanding warrants by partnering with experts to redesign court forms and notices with "behavioral design" principles and by recalling warrants that do not comply with procedural due process requirements; and

WHEREAS, the City is committed to ensuring that Austin Police Department General Orders and related policies reflect the constitutional limits on detention and arrest authority, including with respect to civil and criminal warrants; and

WHEREAS, the City recognizes the importance of ensuring that victims, survivors, and witnesses are treated with dignity and compassion when reporting crimes; and

WHEREAS, the City has a demonstrated commitment to robust community engagement on policies relating to safety, justice, and equity; and

WHEREAS, community engagement on these issues has led to enhanced trust, safer communities, and lasting policy change, including the engagement and resulting policies that emerged from the "Freedom City" resolutions, Resolution No. 20180614-073 and Resolution No. 20180614-074, which City

[2] According to data from January 2023 to December 2024, there were 5,144 arrests for Class C citations. Over 32 percent of those arrested were Black. In addition, data from March 2025 showed that of the approximately 66,000 warrants for unpaid Class C citations that indicated the race of the individual, over 25 percent were Black. Although there is generally inconsistent reporting of Hispanic and Latino individuals, the datasets also indicated disproportionate impact on that population as well.

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Council passed unanimously in 2018; and

WHEREAS, the City is committed to the goal of being a city where all people feel safe to call for help when they need assistance; **NOW, THEREFORE,**

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

Council directs the City Manager to convene a series of meetings with a "Safe to Call" working group of relevant City staff and community partners to explore the development of policies, strategies, and practices designed to assure vulnerable populations that they will be safe and treated in an equitable, victim-centered, trauma-informed way when they call the City for assistance and emergency services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The community partners in the Safe to Call working group should include domestic violence and sexual assault service providers, legal and civil liberties organizations, groups representing directly impacted individuals, and other stakeholders.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Council directs that the Safe to Call stakeholder process described above include exploration of the following topics, while taking into consideration legal and practical constraints:

1. Developing policy proposals to help assure at-risk victims and witnesses that they can report serious offenses without risking arrest on low-level, unrelated warrants. Potential strategies and policies to consider may include:
    a. Identifying victims and witnesses without checking for warrants

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during the call response, unless there is an independent, articulable reason to check for warrants due to concerns for officer safety or suspicion that the individual committed a crime; and

b. Delaying execution of unrelated, low-level warrants against reporting victims and witnesses when responding to calls relating to serious, violent offenses.

2. Developing strategies or other proposals to reduce the number of warrants and arrests for unpaid Class C tickets. Potential strategies and policies to consider may include:

a. Partnership with qualified experts who have demonstrated success reducing warrant rates through behaviorally designed court forms, notices, text message reminders, and webpages;

b. Reducing the number of individuals arrested and transported to the Travis County Jail for Class C warrants through alternatives to arrest such as the Sobering Center, transport straight to the Austin Municipal Court or Community Court for magistration, and streamlined mechanisms for receiving jail credit to clear court debts;

c. Addressing any potential defects with the current warrant system and considering solutions for individuals impacted by any such defects; and

d. Identifying and expanding use of alternatives to issuing citations and warrants, including community-based options such as voluntary referral to behavioral health or substance use treatment, use of the Sobering Center, warnings, and connection to other appropriate community services and resources.

3. Developing policy proposals and communications strategies related to

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APD officers' response to and handling of administrative ICE warrants. Potential proposals and strategies to consider may include:

a. Clarification that, under the Fourth Amendment, APD officers may not detain an individual solely due to an administrative warrant;
b. Training APD officers on the limited legal authority provided by administrative warrants; and
c. A requirement that officers notify individuals when they have administrative warrants and inform them as to whether they are free to leave.

4. Developing reporting requirements that will increase transparency relating to the policies and strategies that are produced through engagement with the Safe to Call working group. Potential reporting requirements may include:
    a. Quarterly reports providing anonymized data concerning arrests made against reporting victims and witnesses for offenses or warrants unrelated to the initial report and the documented reason for the arrest;
    b. Updates on any agreements or memorandums of understanding with federal immigration agencies;
    c. Quarterly reports providing data concerning the number of Class C warrants currently outstanding, broken down by offense, race, ethnicity, when the warrant was issued, and zip code;
    d. Quarterly reports providing data concerning the number of arrests on Class C misdemeanors, broken down by offense, race, ethnicity, when the warrant was issued, zip code of arrest location, time of arrest, and time spent in custody on the Class C misdemeanor from initial arrest to release; and

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e. Any other reporting requirements identified by the Safe to Call working group.

5. Any other priorities identified by the Safe to Call working group related to the goals of this Resolution.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager shall report back to Council on the initial results of the Safe to Call stakeholder process, including any consensus policy or other recommendations, no later than August 30, 2026. In addition, the City Manager shall continue the stakeholder process for a reasonable time beyond August 30, 2026, to allow community members to continue to inform policy development and operational decisions in the areas described in this resolution.

ADOPTED: _____, 2026 **ATTEST:** _____

Erika Brady
City Clerk

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